

## **OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF TRI-CITIES DIOXIN COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

### **Department of Environmental Quality**

### **The Dow Chemical Company**

This is one of a series of quarterly community meetings jointly sponsored by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and The Dow Chemical Company (Dow) regarding corrective action work to address the historic dioxin and furan contamination in and along the Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers and Saginaw Bay and in Midland area soils. With respect to the roles of the various parties who have been participating in these meetings, the DEQ has regulatory and approval authority over Dow's hazardous waste and corrective action activities in accordance with Part 111 of Act 451 and its associated hazardous waste regulations. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has oversight responsibility over the DEQ and these activities pursuant to the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, or RCRA. The Department of Community Health has been working in concert with the DEQ on the public health aspects.

Other participants have included faculty, staff, and graduate students from the University of Michigan and Michigan State University who have been conducting human exposure and ecological studies, respectively, under grants provided by Dow. In addition, a number of contractors, such as Ann Arbor Technical Services, CH2M Hill, Entrix, and The Sapphire Group, are conducting investigations, remediation work, and various other studies and work on Dow's behalf.

The corrective action work that Dow is conducting is mandated under the hazardous waste management facility operating license issued to Dow by the DEQ Waste and Hazardous Materials Division in June of 2003. That license requires corrective action for releases of contaminants beyond the facility boundary. Much of the work that is currently being done is interim response activities (or IRAs) to clean up or remove released contaminants or to take other actions to minimize or prevent the potential for injury to the public health, safety, or welfare, or to the environment prior to the implementation of a final remedial action. As these IRAs are being conducted by Dow, a number of pilot studies for possible future corrective action work are going on, as well as a concurrent review of Dow's Remedial Investigation Work Plans by the DEQ. Over the next couple years, further investigation will be undertaken to determine where the contamination is located and the extent of the contamination so that Dow and the DEQ can evaluate cleanup options and the development of cleanup levels.

In order to help keep the public and stakeholders in the tri-county area informed about all of this corrective action work, these community meetings started back in November of 2005 and the format was developed as a result of public input. The DEQ and Dow have strived to make these meetings transparent and open. There are transcripts of all of the meetings available on DEQ's Web site, so if this is the first meeting you have attended, or if you have missed some of the meetings, transcripts are available to you on-line or by hard copy, upon request, so you can catch up on anything you may have missed to date. The Web site addresses can be found on the back side of your agenda. In addition, the meetings are video-taped and rebroadcast on local cable television (MCTV) in the weeks following the meetings. Copies of the video tapes can be obtained by contacting Dow.

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Most of these meetings have fairly full agendas, and status updates by Dow and its contractors and the DEQ are provided on all of the major work that is currently going on at every meeting. The DEQ and Dow have listened to feedback from attendees and are now setting aside **at least** an hour at the end of each meeting for you to ask questions about any of this evening's or previous presentations or other related topics of interest. It is important to note that while a collaborative approach has been taken to provide information to the public by both Dow and the DEQ, there remain issues as part of this collaborative effort that Dow and the DEQ do not agree on. In particular there are disagreements on the toxicity of dioxins and furans, and there are disagreements on the potential for public health implications and environmental impacts. Do not conclude from comments by either Dow or DEQ that they are necessarily in agreement on the final remediation needs for this area. What can be said, however, is that the issues are being brought forward and discussed in an open forum. Under State law, Dow has the right to conduct a site-specific risk assessment that may conclude that there are protective concentrations that differ from the generic numbers utilized by the DEQ.

The meeting facilitator, the DEQ, and Dow will do our best to move things along so that everybody gets a chance to ask their questions, but some questions may not be able to be answered until further work is completed by Dow. It should also be noted that staff from Dow, their contractors, the DEQ, the Michigan Department of Community Health, and others, will be available for a half hour following the meeting from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. for you to talk with them one-on-one and ask additional questions. In addition to staying after the meeting, these staff are generally also here a half hour early from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. This additional access will be very useful if you want to go into depth on a question or a comment directly with them on an individual basis or in a small group. They can also talk with you about how you might be able to provide assistance with the corrective action process (e.g., by agreeing to provide property access, if you're a river resident, sharing information with neighbors, etc.).

Your attention is also called to the bottom of your agenda. It notes the next meetings in this process. The remaining meetings for the year 2007 are all listed there so you can get them on your calendars and continue to participate in this process.

Any of you who are new to these meetings or this process are encouraged to do some reading before the next meeting to get some of the history on what has been going on with respect to the corrective action work for the rivers and the Midland area. Or you are invited to stay afterwards, if you can, and spend some time with staff from the DEQ, Department of Community Health, and Dow. All of these staff can help you get up to speed, because it can be a little daunting to ask a basic question when many of the participants have been regularly attending meetings for the last year or so. As this process moves forward with new information, knowing about the work that has been completed thus far will help increase your understanding of the investigation and interim response activities that will be proceeding during the upcoming summer season.

Welcome to all who are attending for the first time and thanks to those of you who have been regular participants in these meetings.

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